

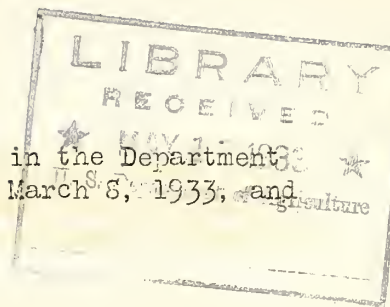
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THE WEATHER OF THE WINTER OF 1932-33.

A radio talk by J. B. Kincer, Weather Bureau, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour, Wednesday, March 8, 1933, and broadcast by a network of 49 associate NBC radio stations.



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How do you do, Folks:

Last fall you doubtless noticed in the papers, from time to time, all kinds of predictions from various sources as to what the winter had in store for us in the way of weather. At one time you probably read that we were to have a mild winter, because corn husks were thin, and again a severe one because they were thick and heavy. Some based their predictions on the action of birds, animals, or other things, but the fact that the behavior of these is influenced by present or past weather instead of that to come, was apparently overlooked. The Weather Bureau is continually called upon for opinion as to the merits of long range forecasts of this kind and we always reply that they have absolutely no physical foundation.

Now, as you know, the year is divided into four seasons of three months each, and as the quarter year extending from the first of December to the first of March has, on the average, colder weather than any other three months, these months, December, January and February, comprise the meteorological winter. As this period for the present year has now passed and our weather reports are at hand for all sections of the country, we are in a position to determine just who was right and who wrong last fall -- the fellow who said the winter would be severe or he who predicted it would be mild. Well, you ask, who won? Now if I were to ask you that question, what would your answer be? If you live in the central or eastern portion of the United States you probably would say the winter was mild, but at the same time there would lurk in the back of your mind that December spell of severely cold weather and the week in February when zero temperatures covered the Ohio Valley and reached Asheville, N. C., and Abilene, Texas. You would recall that during this cold wave temperatures in North Dakota fell to 30 degrees, or more, below zero, and that even usually mild and sunny Galveston, Texas, had 19 degrees above zero. The lowest temperature reported to the Weather Bureau during this cold wave was 63 degrees below zero at Moran, Wyoming, which was within 2 degrees of the coldest weather ever known in the United States, the absolute record being 65 degrees below zero near Miles City, Montana, on January 13, 1888.

However, these two extremely cold spells, and we had only two during the entire winter, were overbalanced by the many weeks of mild, pleasant weather, and the winter, east of the Rocky Mountains will go down in Climatological history as mild. In these areas the average temperature for the three winter months was above normal everywhere and in most sections it was substantially above. In the Southern States the plus departures from normal ranged from about 1 degree to 5 degrees, and in the Central Valleys and the Middle Atlantic area from 3 degrees to 6 degrees. At Philadelphia, 71 per cent of the days comprising the three winter months had above normal temperature; at Washington, 70 per cent, and at Raleigh, N. C., 72 per cent. At Boston for the 13 weeks of the period, each ending Tuesday as published in the Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin, 12 had above normal temperature. New York, Washington, and Atlanta, Georgia, each had 11 weeks

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above normal and only 2 below, while the figures for Buffalo, Detroit, Chicago, Louisville, and Kansas City show 10 weeks of relatively warm weather and only 3 of sub-normal temperatures.

Now if we look at the Far West, that is the States west of the Rocky Mountains, a decidedly different picture comes into view. Out there the winter was severe, with the greatest deficiencies in temperature centering in the Great Basin. In Idaho, Utah, Nevada, and the northern parts of New Mexico and Arizona, the winter was 5 degrees to 10 degrees colder than normal; so you see when we attempt to check up on these long range forecasters we have to know for what part of the country they are predicting. If last fall one had forecast a mild winter, he could now point to the East and say, "I told you so, I was right," and, at the same time, had he predicted a severe one, he probably would swell with pride when looking at our winter temperature map for the Western States. This is usually the case, nature provides enough different brands of weather to make most so-called long range forecasters happy and contented.

However, temperatures during the past winter in the central and eastern United States were in line with recent trends which have been unmistakably upward. When short period fluctuations in the records are smoothed into long time trends, the longer records covering more than 100 years in some cases, a primary depression in temperature is shown to have occurred for the eastern half of the United States about 70 years ago, since which time there has been an irregular, but rather definite trend to warmer weather.

Records for New Haven, Conn., extending back to the time of the Revolutionary War, show three outstanding warm periods during the past 150 years. The first occurred early in the 19th century; the second about 75 years thereafter, and the third covers substantially the last quarter of a century.

Thus we are in the midst of a period of prevailing warm winters, notwithstanding the occurrence of relatively short cold periods such as the winter of 1917-18, and the brief spells of extremely low temperatures that occurred in December and February, last. For example, at St. Louis 12 of the last 13 winters have had above normal temperatures; at New York 10 of the last 13, with the past 6 winters all above normal; and here in Washington, this makes the 13th mild winter in succession.
